Trump Administration Declares Me an Anti-Semite

written by Alan J. Singer | September 30, 2018

I was born a Jew, had a bris and Bar Mitzvah and attended Hebrew school afternoons and Sundays from the age of 7 to 13. I went to schul with my grandfather on holidays and in 1967 I volunteered to defend Israel in the Six-Day War. But I never got to go to Israel then and since the early 1970s, I have refused to visit because of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

I am not a "self-hating" Jew. This summer I toured two concentration camps in Eastern Europe and said Kaddish at an eight-hundred-year-old synagogue in Prague for the six million, including family members, who were killed by the Nazis.

But I continue to oppose the occupation and support efforts to boycott Israel as a way to pressure it to allow the creation of a fully independent Palestinian state. My support for the boycott intensified this spring and summer when Israeli troops used live ammunition to push back and murder protestors at the Gaza-Israel border and when the government declared that only Jews had full rights in the State of Israel.

Because of my opposition to the Israeli occupation, the assistant secretary of education for civil rights in the Trump Administration has now declared me an anti-Semite.

I have no problem with redefining Judaism as an ethnicity rather than as a religion, a ploy used by the Trump education department to justify reopening an investigation of supposed anti-Semitism at Rutgers University in 2011. In fact, many secular Jews like myself identify as ethnic, rather than religious Jews.

But I do object to being labeled an anti-Semite because I believe Israeli treatment of Arabs in Israel proper and in the occupied territories constitutes racism or because I apply what Trump officials believe is a "double standard" by holding Israel accountable for "behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation." Arab activists with whom I agree accuse the United States government of declaring the Palestinian cause itself and its demand for an independent state inherently anti-Semitic.

I do not hold Israel to a double standard. I also oppose racism in the United States and I have participated in Black Lives Matter marches and organized for the removal of statues commemorating champions of slavery.

The redefinition of anti-Semitism as a political weapon against the Palestinian cause is not an isolated action by the Trump Administration. It moved the United States embassy in Israel to

Jerusalem, a symbolic act in support of the rightwing Netanyahu regime and an open insult to Palestinians who also claim Jerusalem as a national capital and Israeli and American Jews demanding fairer treatment of Arabs and respect for their human and civil rights. The Trump Administration also recently cut humanitarian aid that supported Palestinian schools and medical facilities.

My father was a strong supporter of Israel who visited the country many times. Just before he died we were talking about the Israeli treatment of Arabs on the West Bank and Gaza. My father pleaded that Jews would never do such things. Unfortunately, they are. I am an ethnic Jew opposed to Israeli and Trump Administration policies and that does not make me an anti-Semite.

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